MUSI 240 Syllabus - 2016

MUSI 240 – Unity and Variety in Music – is a 3-credit Group I distribution course for non-music majors that will meet Tues, Thurs in APB Rm. 1133 from 9:25 to 10:40. The professor is Michael Webster, former principal clarinetist of the Rochester Philharmonic, acting principal clarinetist of the San Francisco Symphony, and professor of clarinet at the Shepherd School. I am also artistic director of the Houston Youth Symphony. My office, Rm. 2200, is located on the north end of Alice Pratt Brown Hall, second floor, beyond the practice rooms and Mr. Lin's studio (Rm. 2201). Office hours will be by appointment. The office telephone number is 713-348-3602. Please don't call me at home or on my cell phone. Sending an email to mwebster@rice.edu is the best way to communicate. The syllabus is somewhat flexible, and subject to input from the class.

MUSI 240 will investigate how music requires both unity and variety, studying the techniques that composers use to achieve a balance between the two. Reading music is a prerequisite. Having learned how to read one line of a melody instrument is sufficient preparation. We will, however, be using scores for three lines, especially a melody voice with piano accompaniment. If this is new to you, I'll help you learn quickly. Anything more complicated, such as a piece for orchestra, will be presented either in simplified form or with roadmaps to follow.

More often, we will be listening to music rather than reading it. Becoming more perceptive as listeners is the prime goal of MUSI 240. We will improve our skill in identifying such things as major and minor keys, modulations, rhythmic meters, musical form, motivic development, and the function of melody, harmony, rhythm, color, and text in attaining a balance between unity and variety in a piece of music.

Our first class (Tuesday, Jan 12) will feature "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," the first of a series of songs by Harold Arlen that will introduce basic form and motivic development. This will serve to introduce Schubert Lieder and keyboard sonatas by a variety of composers. I will be posting both audio and video links on Owlspace, including youtube performances. The first assignment will be for each class member to choose a favorite song in any style – classical, rock, pop, jazz, country – you name it, post it on Owlspace, and be prepared to engage in a discussion of how the composer has manipulated his/her musical

materials.

I will post particularly interesting concerts at the Shepherd School on the schedule at Owlspace. Occasionally, you may be required to attend a specific concert and take notes. This won't happen often, but is an integral part of the course when it does.

There will be occasional quizzes consisting of listening to or looking at musical examples and identifying compositional devices. I'll grade quizzes on a scale of 1 to 10. There will be a midterm and a final exam to sum up the semester's work. Work toward the end of the semester will be weighted more heavily than at the beginning of the semester so that improvement will be rewarded.

Attendance and class participation are especially important for this course, and will affect your grade. I will keep track of absences and lateness and give you a quick warning if you are in danger of having your grade lowered.

The textbook for the class is: What to Listen for in Music by Aaron Copland. Order the Signet Classic paperback (rev. Feb. 2011), available at Amazon for $3.19-$7.95 and $3.99 shipping and handling. I'll supply all other materials. There will be a lot of musical examples, so dedicate a folder or notebook to MUSI 240. You'll be expected to follow the Rice Honor Code for all homework assignments.

If you have a disability that requires accommodation, contact both me and Disability Support Services at the Allen Center.